

REMARKS

Claims 1-21 were pending in this application when the present Office Action was mailed (December 13, 2006). In this response, claims 1, 5, 11, 16, and 17 have been amended not in response to the outstanding claim rejections, but rather to further clarify the claimed subject matter. Claims 56 has been added in this response. Accordingly, claims 1-21 and 56 are currently pending.

In the December 13, 2006 Office Action, claims 1-3, 5-14, and 16-21 were rejected. More specifically, the status of the application in light of this Office Action is as follows:

(A) Claims 1-3, 8-14 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of U.S. Patent No. 6,624,879 to Imai ("Imai") and Japan Patent No. 10-294261 to Akune ("Akune");

(B) Claims 5, 6, 16, 17, 20 and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Imai and Akune, and U.S. Patent No. 6,290,863 to Morgan ("Morgan") or U.S. Patent No. 6,666,927 to Gindel ("Gindel") or Japan Patent No. 5-291400 to Hitachi Ltd. ("Hitachi"); and

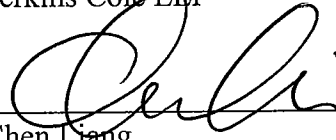
(C) Claims 4 and 15 are allowed.

The undersigned attorney wishes to thank the Examiner for engaging in a telephone interview on March 12, 2007. During the telephone interview, the Examiner agreed to withdraw the Section 103 rejections of previously pending claims 1-3, 5-14, and 16-21. As a result, previously pending claims 1-3, 5-14, and 16-21 patentably distinguished over the cited references without the amendments in this paper. The foregoing amendments, therefore, were not made for the purpose of patentability, and the claims should be entitled to a full range of equivalents. The applicants also do not disclaim the amended subject matter and expressly preserve the right to pursue the amended subject matter in a continuation, continuation-in-part, or other application. The applicants request that this paper also constitute the applicants' Interview Summary. If the Examiner notices any deficiencies in this regard, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney.

Although the applicants' attorney agrees with the Examiner's decision to withdraw the Section 103 rejections of previously pending claims 1-3, 5-14, and 16-21, claims 1, 5, 11, 16, and 17 have been amended to further clarify the claimed subject matter. In view of the foregoing, the pending claims comply with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112 and are patentable over the applied art. The applicants accordingly request reconsideration of the application and a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at (206) 359-6038.

Respectfully submitted,

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